

## Research Statement

My dissertation investigates the idea of philosophical gymnastic [*Gymnastike*] in Plato's *Parmenides*. By gymnastic, here, I mean an exercise or training, as calisthenics for the body, but specifically with respect to the mind. Gymnastic, in this way, is bound to the training Plato advocated and even employed in the Academy. Therefore, an exploration of what this exercise comprises, adds greatly not only to Platonic scholarship with respect to the *Parmenides*, but also to thought concerning ancient educational practice in philosophy. Furthermore, this research contributes, beyond specifically ancient scholarship, to contemporary conversations regarding pedagogy and education.

In this dialogue, the elder philosopher Parmenides displays to a young Socrates eight variations on a thesis, or eight hypotheses. The display of these hypotheses in the text are the very exercises or training that Parmenides offers to Socrates. However, there is no consensus on either the meaning of the hypotheses, nor on how they relate to the narrative structure in the dialogue. *Parmenides* scholarship has generally concentrated on understanding the hypotheses as a display of Plato's metaphysics, and this has many varieties and traditions. Some consider Parmenides' criticism of Socrates' theory of forms, which occasions the hypotheses, as Plato's self-criticism. Others see in the hypotheses a method for overcoming the problematic theory of forms. However, I argue that we must understand the gymnastic as aligned with what Parmenides claims: as a practice to benefit young Socrates.

Rather than a criticism of forms or merely a display of metaphysics, I show through a careful examination of the Greek text, that the hypotheses are a practice to develop and sustain the theory of forms. By understanding the hypotheses as an *exercise* rather than merely a dogmatic metaphysics, and seeing how the dialogue employs didactic (the ancient pedagogical tradition) as a central motif of the narrative structure, the *Parmenides* can be seen in a new and evocative way. Furthermore, I show that the narrative structure of the *Parmenides* contextualizes the hypotheses to be seen as a program. This unified understanding of the dialogue reveals unacknowledged resources to understand Plato's position concerning education in philosophy, and in fact, the philosophy of education. Accordingly, my dissertation supports inquiry concerning Plato's metaphysics and self cultivation or pedagogy, including the extent and efficacy that intellectual exercise has on potential academic students.

This research contributes to Plato scholarship in several important ways: First, it unifies the narrative structure in the first part of the dialogue with the hypotheses displayed in the latter part. This unification is essential, because it challenges dominant views that place the hypotheses as preeminent in importance but leave unnoticed how the narrative structure contextualizes the hypotheses, not simply as a metaphysics, but also as exercises. In particular, it shows how the

unacknowledged motif of didactic can be seen to unify the shape of the dialogue. Secondly, this dissertation recasts the Platonic project as a provocative pedagogical undertaking without requiring any conjecture about Plato's philosophical development, or a view that the *Parmenides* represents a move away from Plato's earlier thoughts, which is a standard view of the text. I argue for an alternative view, that the *Parmenides* affirms so-called earlier thinking, and sets out a practice for advanced learning. Third, this project articulates anew the effect and benefit of the hypotheses as exercise. That is, this research examines what the hypotheses can and cannot offer the young Socrates, who in *Parmenides* is the paradigm of a philosophical student. Moreover, this dissertation explores how and to what extent gymnastic exercise cultivates philosophical insight, not simply for the student Socrates, but rather for capable students of the dialogue in general.

My next research project will investigate the notion of music [*musike*], which alongside gymnastic, represent the two-part educational paradigm employed in Plato, famously in the *Republic*. While it is well known that music is an essential aspect of education for Plato, it has not been fully excavated or understood, particularly in its connection to exercise and gymnastic. Research in Plato's use of *musike* is not only an exploration of the art of music including how harmony relates to the soul, but also music in a broad sense, as a gift from the divine or the muse.

Music, for Plato, is an essential practice for the education of potential philosophers in the *Republic*, and furthermore, it relates to recollection in the *Phaedo*, inspiration in the *Ion*, and myth making in general. Research into Plato's use of music also explores the tenuous relationship that epic poetry, such as Homer and Hesiod, holds to education. Lastly, and most conspicuously, music in Plato can be understood as that which philosophical insight is based upon, and such insight is that which the young Socrates is admired for in the *Parmenides*. Following this, insight (and therefore music) appears to be required for gymnastic exercise to truly be beneficial. Therefore, an exploration of music in Plato is essential for understanding his views concerning philosophical cultivation, and it is essential research that has not yet sufficiently been explored.